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United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response and the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) and the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola (A/69/404). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 30 September 2014.

2. The Mission was established by the Secretary-General following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/1 and on the basis of the identical letters dated 17 September 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (A/69/389-S/2014/679). In its resolution 69/1, the General Assembly, inter alia, welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to establish UNMEER and requested him to take such measures as might be necessary for the prompt execution of his intention and to submit a detailed report thereon for consideration by the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. The Advisory Committee was informed that it was the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a detailed budget for UNMEER by the third week of November 2014. Pending such submission, in his report the Secretary-General requests the Assembly to approve the estimated preliminary resource requirements of UNMEER and the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola for the period from 19 September to 31 December 2014 and to authorize him to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $49,943,600.

3. The Advisory Committee was provided with some background information on the evolution of the situation leading to the establishment of the Mission. The outbreak of Ebola haemorrhagic fever started in Guinea in March 2014 and subsequently spread to Sierra Leone and Liberia. On 8 August, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak in West Africa to be a public health emergency of international concern and emergency plans of action for

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preparedness were launched to prevent the outbreak from spreading to neighbouring countries. On 12 August, the Secretary-General appointed a United Nations coordinator on Ebola to provide overall strategic direction and to assist Governments in the region in responding to the crisis. The Ebola virus disease continued to spread at an exponential rate, however, with the number of cases doubling approximately every three weeks and a high rate of mortality. On 28 August, WHO issued an Ebola response road map[1] setting out the goal, context, priority activities, major issues in operationalizing the road map, major roles and responsibilities, the monitoring and evaluation framework and estimated costs. As already mentioned, in mid-September the Secretary-General wrote a letter to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, in which he stated that the Ebola crisis was no longer just a public health crisis but had become multidimensional, with significant social, economic, humanitarian, logistical and security dimensions.

4. The Secretary-General indicates that the planning process for the deployment of the Mission is under way and is being coordinated across Secretariat departments and partners of the United Nations system, including with the Director General of WHO and the Special Envoy on Ebola. The framework for the deployment of the Mission continues to evolve, and the assumptions underlying the staffing and operational requirements will be refined as engagement with the international community continues. The Secretary-General indicates that the immediate focus of the Mission will be to provide overall coordination and strategic guidance to the efforts of the United Nations country teams in support of the Ebola crisis, and to fill gaps where needed.

5. The Advisory Committee was informed that, in the light of the rapid spread of the disease, highest priority had been given to establishing initial capability on the ground in the countries concerned following the establishment of the Mission on 19 September 2014. Because of the urgent nature of the requirement, as well as the ongoing planning process, the Secretariat had been unable to conduct a thorough analysis and provide full details in support of the request for resources.

6. The Advisory Committee will examine the proposed organizational structure, working modalities and staffing and operational resource requirements of the Mission when it considers the detailed budget submission. On the basis of its exchange with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMEER and the written responses provided by the Secretariat, in the paragraphs below the Committee makes observations and recommendations that should be taken into account by the Secretary-General.

Mandate and expected results

7. The Advisory Committee was informed that the Mission will pursue five strategic priorities: stop the spread of the disease, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent the spread of the disease to countries currently unaffected. It will work with other partners, including Member States, Governments and national structures in the affected countries, regional and international actors such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental

[1] See www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/ebola/response-roadmap/en/.

organizations, as well as the specialized agencies, the funds and programmes and other entities of the United Nations system already on the ground.

8. The Advisory Committee was also informed that the Mission will draw upon the support of the existing United Nations presence in the area, relying on the technical capabilities and expertise of WHO, the resources of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the situational awareness and other capacities of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the United Nations Mission in Liberia. In this connection, the Committee was further informed that UNMEER was already working with other United Nations entities with existing capabilities on the ground, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WHO, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund. The Secretary-General indicates that the Special Envoy on Ebola will continue to represent the United Nations system and provide overarching strategic leadership, coordination and guidance, including through consultations with Member States and other stakeholders, as well as lead international efforts to mobilize and sustain the necessary political will and strategic resources.

9. The Advisory Committee was informed that UNMEER was the first United Nations emergency health mission to have been established by the United Nations, and that the Secretary-General had emphasized to the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes and Secretariat departments the need for them to work together to achieve the objectives of the Mission. **The Advisory Committee emphasizes the need for close coordination and cooperation among all partners in order to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Mission. Given the involvement of multiple senior officials in leadership roles, the Committee stresses the need to ensure overall coherence in the execution of the mandate of the Mission. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that every effort is made to sustain close coordination and a coherent approach at the operational level.**

10. **Given the large number and wide range of entities and partners involved in the effort to combat Ebola, and given also the unprecedented nature of the Mission, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide, in the detailed budget submission, comprehensive information on the response of the United Nations system and the specific functions and tasks of UNMEER and of other partners, as well as on the lines of accountability and responsibility.**

11. The Advisory Committee has been informed that WHO and the Special Envoy on Ebola were responsible for setting the strategy for combating Ebola and defining the operational response targets required to halt the growth in transmission.[2] In this connection, the Committee recalls that, in the identical letters addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (A/69/389-S/2014/679), the Secretary-General indicated that the Mission would exist only as long as was necessary to stem the crisis. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to specify, in his detailed budget submission, the operational targets of the**

[2] To halt the growth in the spread of the Ebola virus and in transmission, WHO has defined the initial operational target as the implementation of a plan whereby 70 per cent of Ebola-infected persons are treated and 70 per cent of the bodies of persons having died as a result of Ebola infection are buried safely within 60 days.

Mission, as well as the benchmarks, indicators of achievement and expected time frames for the success of the Mission.

Mission profile and staffing

12. The Secretary-General indicates his intention to establish 283 general temporary assistance-funded positions comprising the following: 1 position of Special Envoy on Ebola at the level of Under-Secretary-General; 93 positions based at the Mission headquarters in Accra, including a special representative at the level of Under-Secretary-General; 52 positions for each of the country crisis response teams based in the three affected countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), each led by an Ebola crisis manager at the level of Assistant Secretary-General; 7 positions for the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, Uganda, for backstopping; 6 positions based in New York for Member State liaison, engagement and reporting; and 20 positions for backstopping at Headquarters.

13. The Advisory Committee will examine the proposed organizational structure, the working modalities and the staffing and operational resource requirements of the Mission in the context of its consideration of the detailed budget submission. **Based on its initial review of the preliminary proposals of the Secretary-General for the staffing of UNMEER, the Advisory Committee emphasizes the need for a rigorous assessment of the envisaged structure and staffing. It also emphasizes the need to ensure that the grade levels of the proposed positions are closely aligned with their respective functions and responsibilities. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to present a structure that is justified by the specific functions of the Mission and the totality of available capacities, including those of other United Nations system entities and partners involved in this effort, and that ensures coherence with existing structures on the ground.**

14. **Given the need for the rapid deployment of personnel, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the Mission should continue to use personnel on short-term loan in the initial period until there is greater clarity on the effective lifespan of the Mission. The Committee emphasizes the need for strict compliance with the Staff Rules and Regulations of the United Nations, including those on the recruitment of staff, and recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide details on the recruitment of staff in his detailed budget submission.**

Non-post resources

15. A summary of the estimated preliminary resource requirements is provided in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General. The proposed requirements for non-post resources amount to $44,282,100, comprising: $2,500,000 under official travel; $3,980,000 under facilities and infrastructure; $3,530,400 under ground transportation; $9,071,700 under air transportation; $1,975,000 under communications; $575,000 under information technology; $5,150,000 under medical; and $17,500,000 under other supplies, services and equipment. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide detailed justifications for non-post categories of expenditure in the detailed budget submission, taking into account the total**

resources made available through the multi-partner trust fund, as well as by Member States and other partners, including any in-kind contributions.

Budgetary arrangements

16. The Advisory Committee notes that, in the oral statement that he made to the General Assembly on 19 September 2014 on the draft resolution on measures to contain and combat the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the Secretary-General did not provide details on estimates of expenditure nor on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution before its adoption. The Committee was informed that, since the adoption of the resolution, the Secretary-General has committed a sum of $2 million under the provision contained in paragraph 1 (a) of Assembly resolution 68/249 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2014-2015. The Committee will revert to the question of the budgetary mechanism used for such requests at the time of its consideration of the detailed budget submission.

17. In paragraph 4 of his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the Mission and the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola would be incorporated into section 27, Humanitarian assistance, of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, given the thematic nature of the emergency response. It is also proposed that, as a field mission, UNMEER be supported mainly by the Department of Field Support and the Department of Management, as well as the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe. During its exchange with representatives of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretariat had considered various budgetary arrangements for UNMEER that would affect where the Mission should be placed within the regular budget, including options for its establishment as a special political mission. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to elaborate further on the rationale for the proposed budgetary arrangements for UNMEER and possible alternative options in the context of his detailed budget submission.**

Resources and expenditure

18. The Secretary-General indicates that a multi-partner trust fund has been established to channel human, material, logistical and financial resources from Member States and other stakeholders to the operational response. The Advisory Committee notes that the level of resources made available to the multi-partner trust fund will have a significant impact on the operations of the Mission and the volume of activities that it can carry out, as well as on the scale of resources to be provided by the United Nations to fill gaps and, consequently, on the budget of UNMEER. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to make every effort to seek contributions to the multi-partner trust fund.**

19. Similarly, the resource requirements and activities of the Mission will be affected by the level of direct resources made available to support United Nations system entities and other partners, including Member States, the Governments and national structures of the affected countries, regional and international actors such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations.

20. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide in the detailed budget submission, in addition to the resource requirements of the Mission, information on the totality of the expected resources by funding source, in a manner similar to the presentation of other assessed and extrabudgetary resources in the submission of individual sections of the biennial proposed programme budget.

21. Furthermore, given the large number of partners and sources of funding, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to maintain, with immediate effect, a system of detailed and robust accounting and proper attribution of all expenditure incurred by activity, funding source and categories and objects of expenditure, and to report thereon in the context of the detailed budget submission. Given the field-based nature of UNMEER, the Committee expects that it will use the enterprise resource planning system (Umoja) that was recently implemented in peacekeeping and special political missions, which should enable a sufficient level of detail for reporting purposes.

22. While noting the need for agility and speed on the part of the Organization to address this unique challenge, the Advisory Committee stresses the need for compliance with all existing rules and regulations, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and established procedures of the United Nations.

Conclusion and recommendations

23. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $49,943,600 for the requirements of the Mission for the period from 19 September to 31 December 2014 pending the submission of a detailed budget during the latter part of the main part of its sixty-ninth session.

24. The Advisory Committee emphasizes that the above recommendation for funding is made without prejudice to any recommendation that it may make to the General Assembly when it considers the detailed budget submission for the Mission or any decision that the Assembly might take thereon with regard to the organizational structure of the Mission, its staffing and operational requirements.

25. The Advisory Committee also emphasizes that the above recommendation does not prejudge the position that it may take on similar requests regarding other missions that may be submitted in the future.